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ABSTRACT

This chartbook focuses on women's economic activity including labor force trends, occupational and industrial employment patterns, unemployment, and market work of women in a family context. The 15 charts show that women play an important role in the labor market; women's participation has grown dramatically; a smaller proportion of women fill the traditional full-time housekeeping role; three out of four employed adult women work full time; women work in all sectors of the economy; the number of working women has increased sharply in clinical and professional jobs; an average 20-year-old woman can expect to spend approximately 25 years in the labor force; women's share of labor force growth is expected to increase in the 1980s; until recently, women's unemployment rates have been higher; unemployment among women varies by race, education, and age; the proportion of children with mothers in the labor force has grown to more than half; half of all married women are now in the labor force; the proportion of families maintained by a woman has increased markedly; women who maintain families are more likely to face serious economic difficulties; and women's earnings continue to average about 60 percent of men's. Summary statements accompany the charts. (YLB)

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Women at Work: A Chartbook

U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics
April 1983

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Women at Work: A Chartbook

U.S. Department of Labor
Raymond J. Donovan, Secretary

Bureau of Labor Statistics
Janet L. Norwood, Commissioner

April 1983

Bulletin 2168

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Foreword

The dramatic increase in the participation of women has been the most striking demographic change in the U.S. labor force in recent decades. In 1950, women accounted for less than 30 percent of the labor force; by 1982, they accounted for 43 percent.

Women have obtained jobs in just about every field of employment, but the majority continue to work in the traditional professional, clerical, and service jobs. Their earnings continue to average only 60 percent of the earnings of men. Women who maintain families on their own face particularly serious problems.

Publication of this chartbook about women at work is part of the continuing program of the Bureau of Labor Statistics to report on the employment situation of many worker groups. We hope that the chartbook will enhance the understanding of women's contribution to the economy.

JANET L. NORWOOD
Commissioner of Labor Statistics

Preface

This chartbook focuses on women's economic activity—labor force trends, occupational and industrial employment patterns, unemployment, and market work of women in a family context.

The information comes primarily from the Current Population Survey, conducted monthly for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the Bureau of the Census. Readers interested in keeping informed on current developments among women in the labor force can consult *Employment and Earnings* and the *Monthly Labor Review*, both available monthly by subscription from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, and a quarterly report, *Employment in Perspective: Working Women*, available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, D.C. 20212. Special analyses about the labor force activity of women are published in the *Monthly Labor Review* and often are reissued, with detailed tabulations, as Special Labor Force Reports, sold through GPO and BLS regional offices.

This chartbook was prepared in the Division of Employment and Unemployment Analysis under the direction of John E. Bregger, Chief, by Deborah Pisetzner Klein, Elizabeth Waldman, and Howard Hayghe. Word processing was done by Clara Colbert. The graphics were developed under the direction of John Sinks of the Division of General Systems by Brian Baker, Cynthia Martin, and Robert Whitmore. Graphics production was done in the Division of Production Services under the direction of Gilbert W. Sturman, Chief, by Mary Simmons, Dennis Rucker, and Cynthia Mabry.

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Women play an important role in the labor market

Women as a proportion of . . .

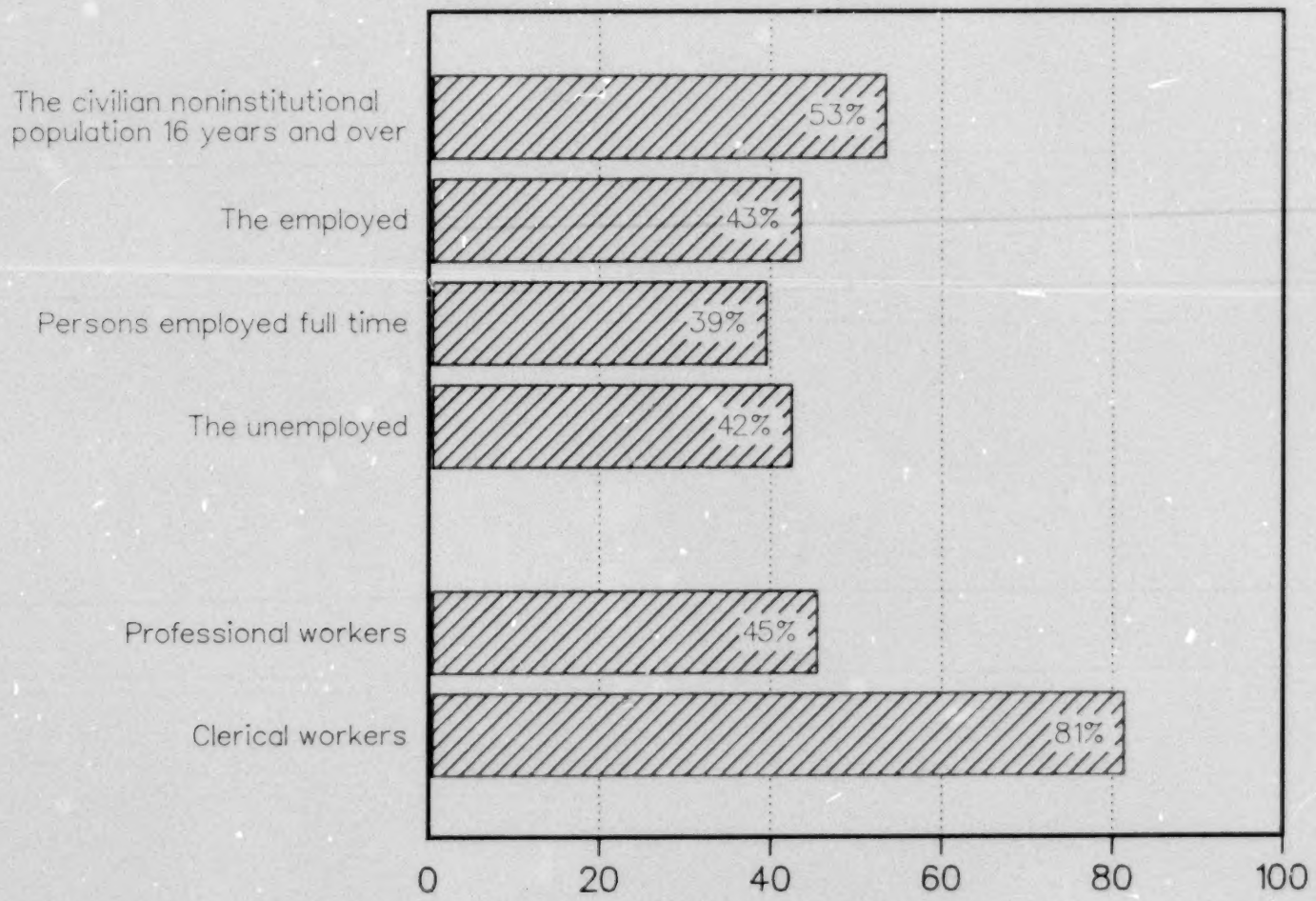

Chart 1. Summary labor force indicators for women, 1982

- The proportion of women who are in the labor force has grown from one-third in 1950 to more than half today.

- Since 1970, nearly half of the increase in the female labor force has been among women age 25 to 34. Today, 1 out of 4 women workers is in this age group.

- Although participation rates for men continue to exceed those for women, the gap has narrowed considerably. Men were 2½ times as likely as women to be in the labor force in 1950 but are only 1½ times as likely today.

Women's participation in the labor force has grown dramatically

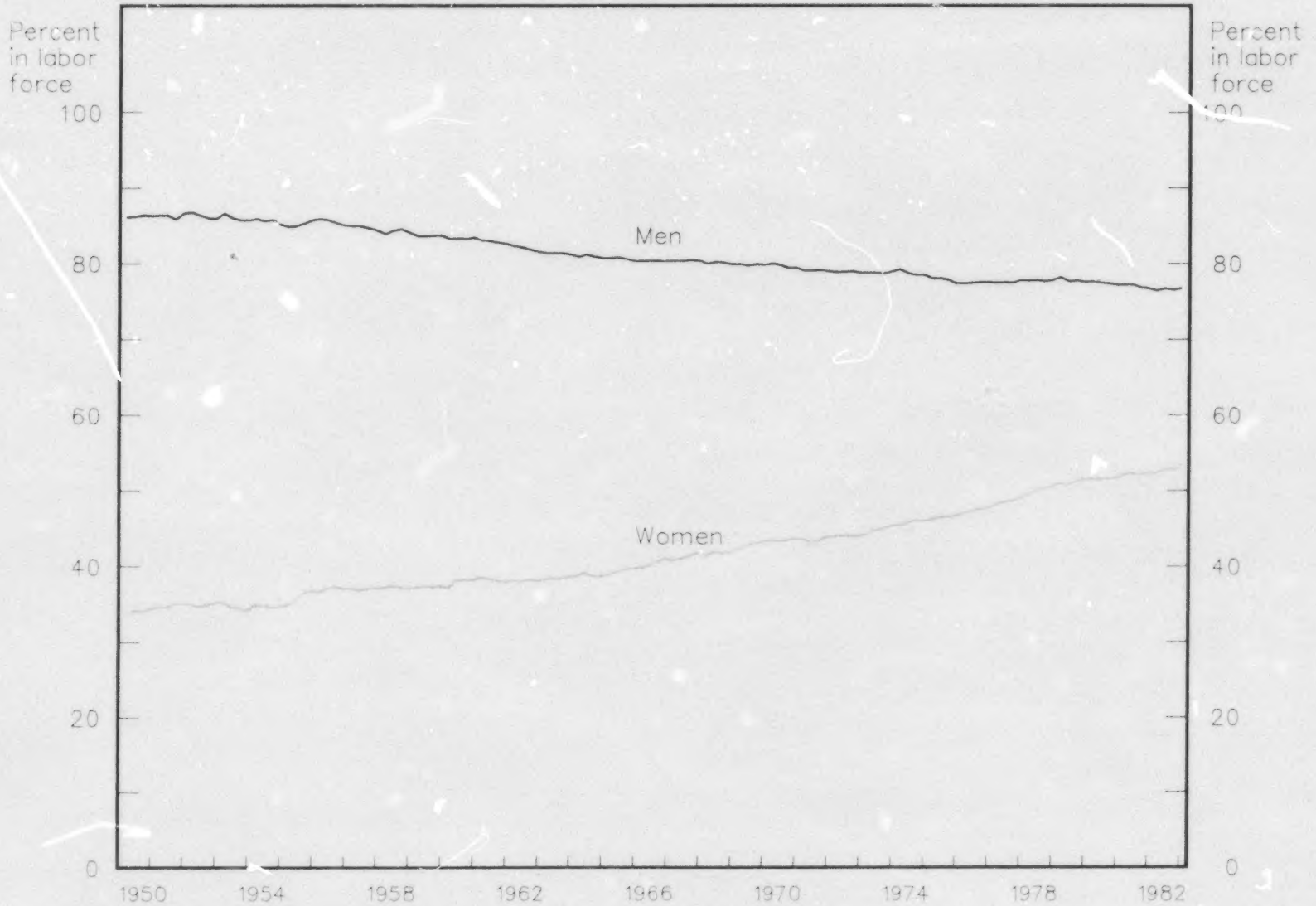

Chart 2. Labor force participation rates by sex, 1950-82

- In the early 1960's, about half the women in the United States were keeping house full time while 37 percent were in the labor force. By 1982, these proportions were reversed—53 percent were working or looking for work while 35 percent were keeping house.

- This sweeping change in women's role in our society has significantly affected the workplace and the family. For example, in 1982 more than 4 out of every 10 workers were women; families where both husband and wife worked outside the home accounted for 52 percent of all married-couple families; and nearly 55 percent of all children had working mothers.

- Of the 32 million women who were full-time homemakers in 1982, 6 out of 10 were 45 years old or older.

A smaller proportion of women fill the traditional full-time housekeeping role

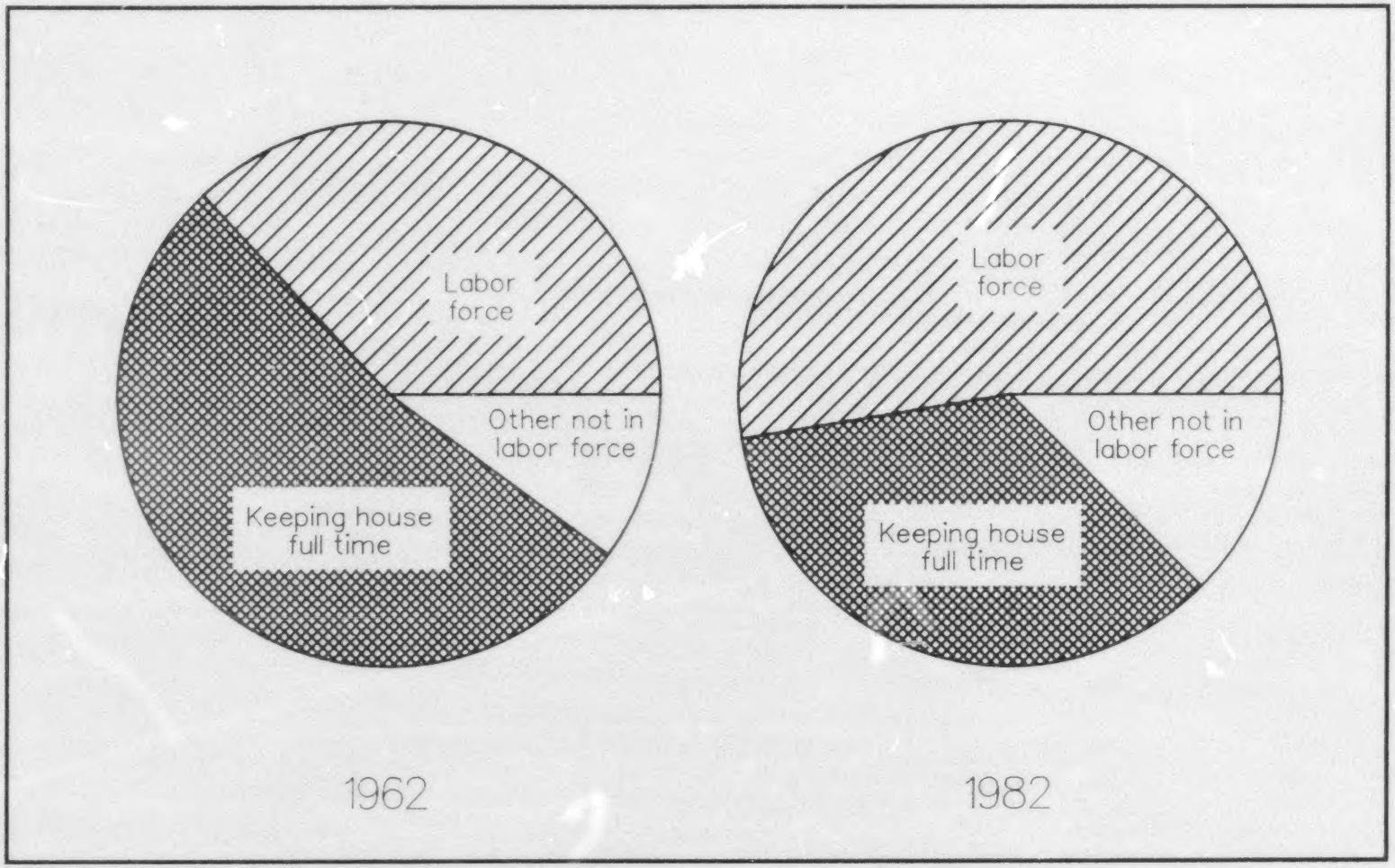

Chart 3. Labor force status of women, 1962 and 1982

- Three-quarters of employed adult women are full-time workers, compared with more than 9 out of 10 men and less than half of all teenagers.

- Most employed women work year round. In 1981, 3 out of every 5 employed adult women worked 50 to 52 weeks.

- Wives were less likely to work year round full time then other women, but, even so, 45 percent of the wives were year-round, full-time workers. The presence of children affects the amount of time some wives devote to work outside the home; about 73 percent of those with no children under 18 worked year round full time, compared with 44 percent of those with children.

Three out of four employed adult women work full time

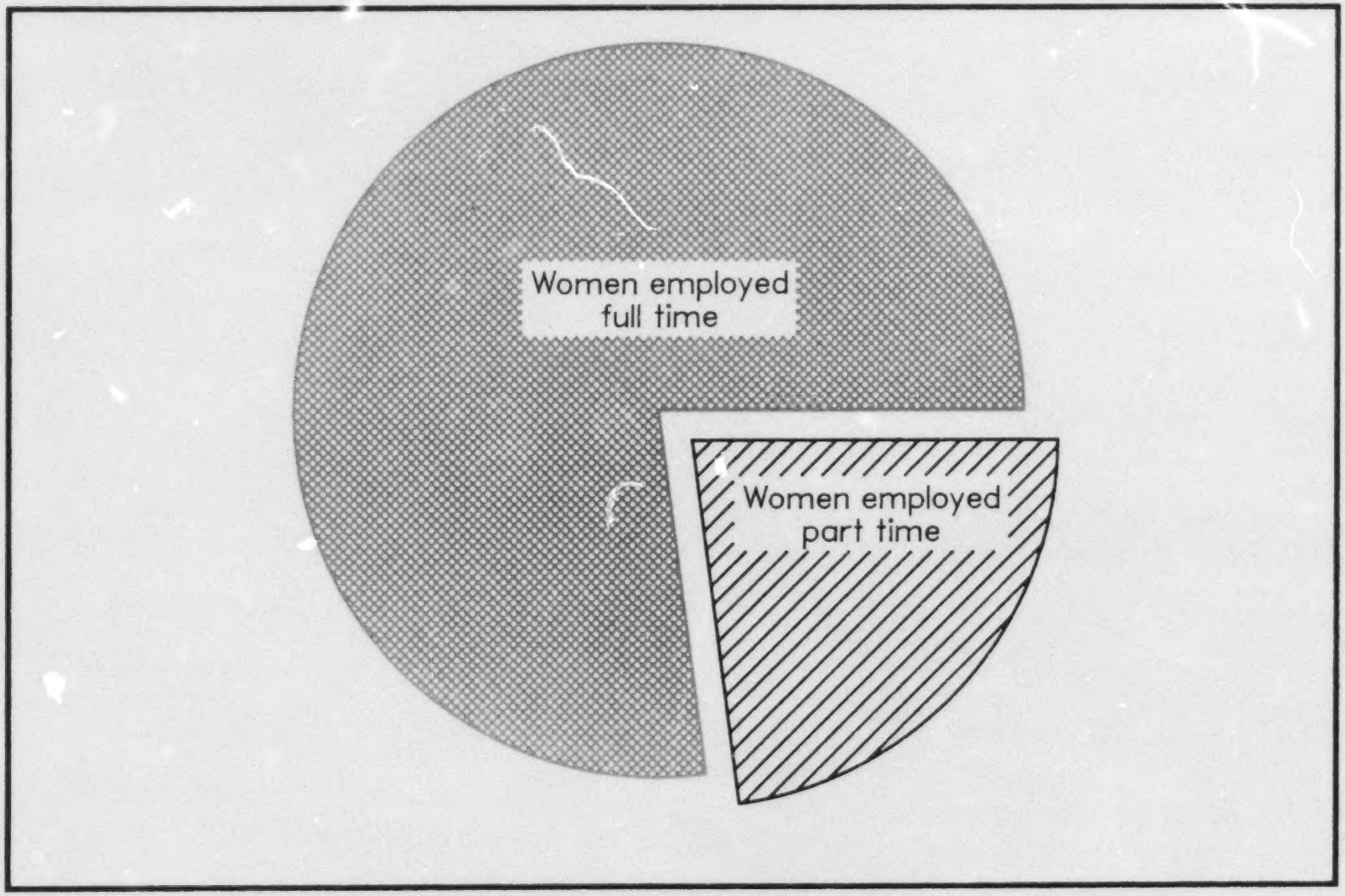

Chart 4. Employed women by full- or part-time status, 1982

• Women are on the payrolls of every major industry group but are especially concentrated in the service-producing sector of the economy. Of all employees in the service-producing sector in 1982, half were women. In contrast, women made up a little over one-fourth of the workers in the goods-producing industries.

• Three of the service-producing industries—retail trade, services such as health, business, and educational services, and State and local government—accounted for most of the job gains for women over the past decade. Of the roughly 13-million increase in the number of women on nonagricultural payrolls since 1970, three-fourths occurred in these fast-growing industries.

• Most women continue to work in the lowest paying industries. Put another way, those industries with low average hourly earnings have high proportions of female employees.

Women work in all sectors of the economy

Women as a proportion of . . .

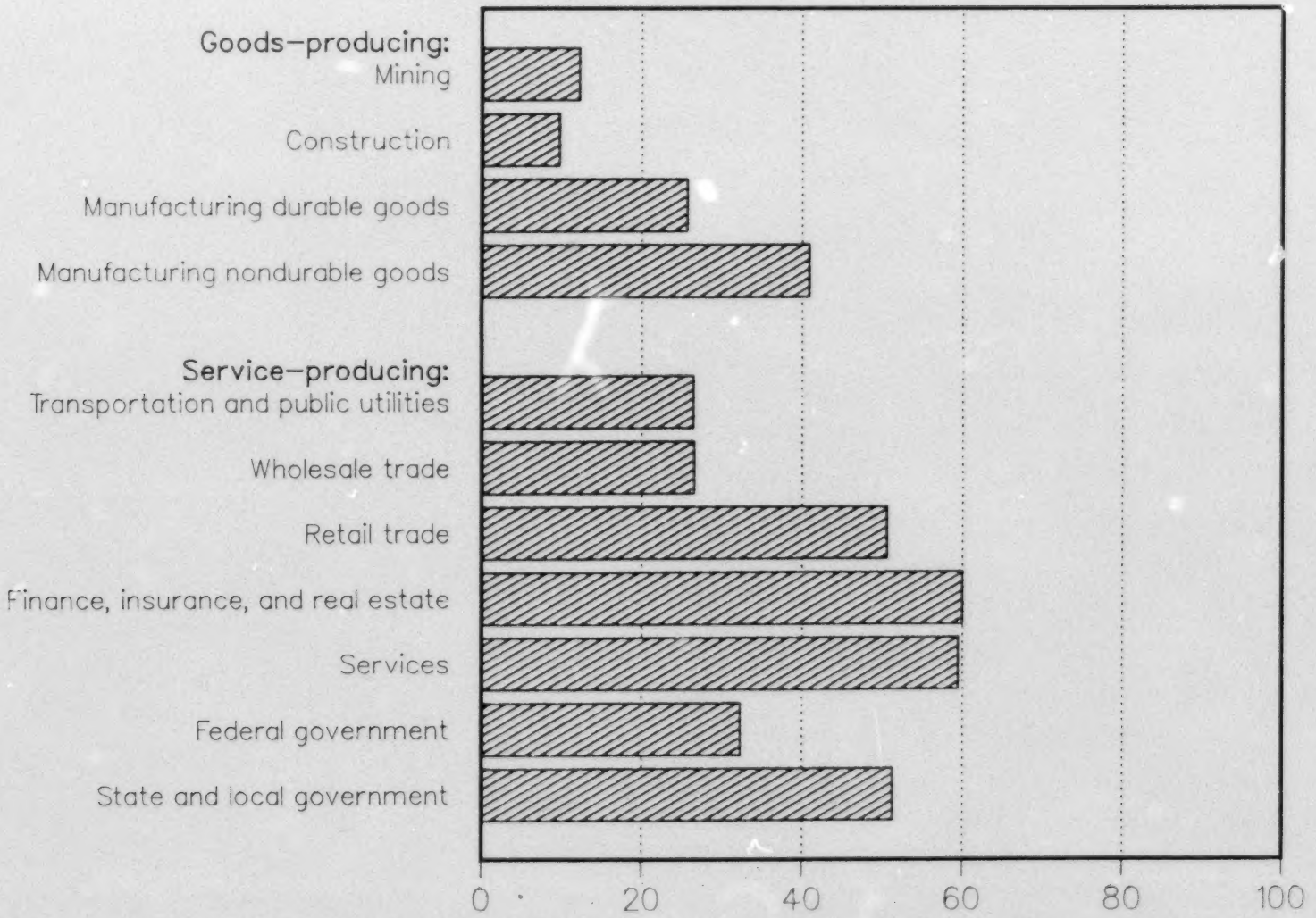

Chart 5. Employed women as a proportion of workers on nonagricultural payrolls by industry group, 1982

- Between 1972 and 1982, the number of women working in clerical and professional occupations rose by more than 50 percent to 23 million, 52 percent of all women workers. A substantial increase also occurred in the service occupations, which, in 1982, accounted for 1 out of 5 employed women.

- Women remain concentrated in the traditionally female occupational fields. In 1982, 99 percent of secretaries, 96 percent of nurses, and 82 percent of elementary school teachers were women.

- On the other hand, women now work in a greater variety of professional fields than in the past. A decade ago, about three-fifths of all women employed in professional fields were either teachers or nurses. By 1982, that proportion had declined to one-half.

The number of working women has increased sharply in clerical and professional jobs

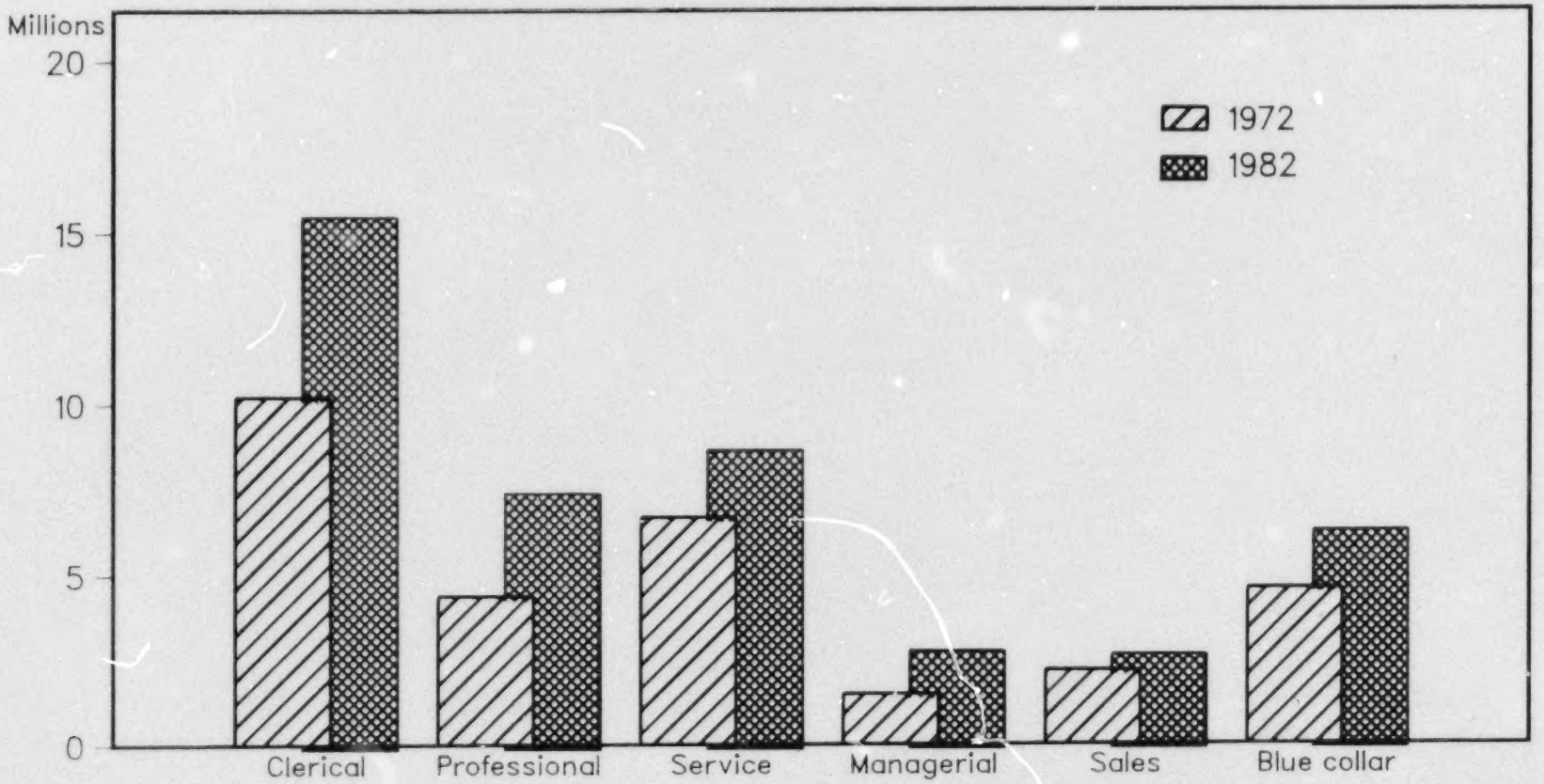

Chart 6. Employed women by occupational group, 1972 and 1982

- The number of years an average 20-year-old woman could expect to spend in the labor force nearly doubled between 1950 and 1977, rising from 14½ to 26 years. In contrast, the worklife expectancy of a 20-year-old man drifted down from about 41½ to 37 years over the same period.

- Among women, worklife expectancy has increased faster than life expectancy, and in 1977 a 20-year-old woman could expect to spend 45 percent of her life in the labor market, up from 27 percent in 1950.

- The longer life span for men has been channeled into nonwork activities. Thus, in 1977, a 20-year-old man could expect to spend 72 percent of his life in the labor force, down from an 85-percent expectancy in 1950.

An average 20-year-old woman can expect to spend a quarter of a century in the labor force

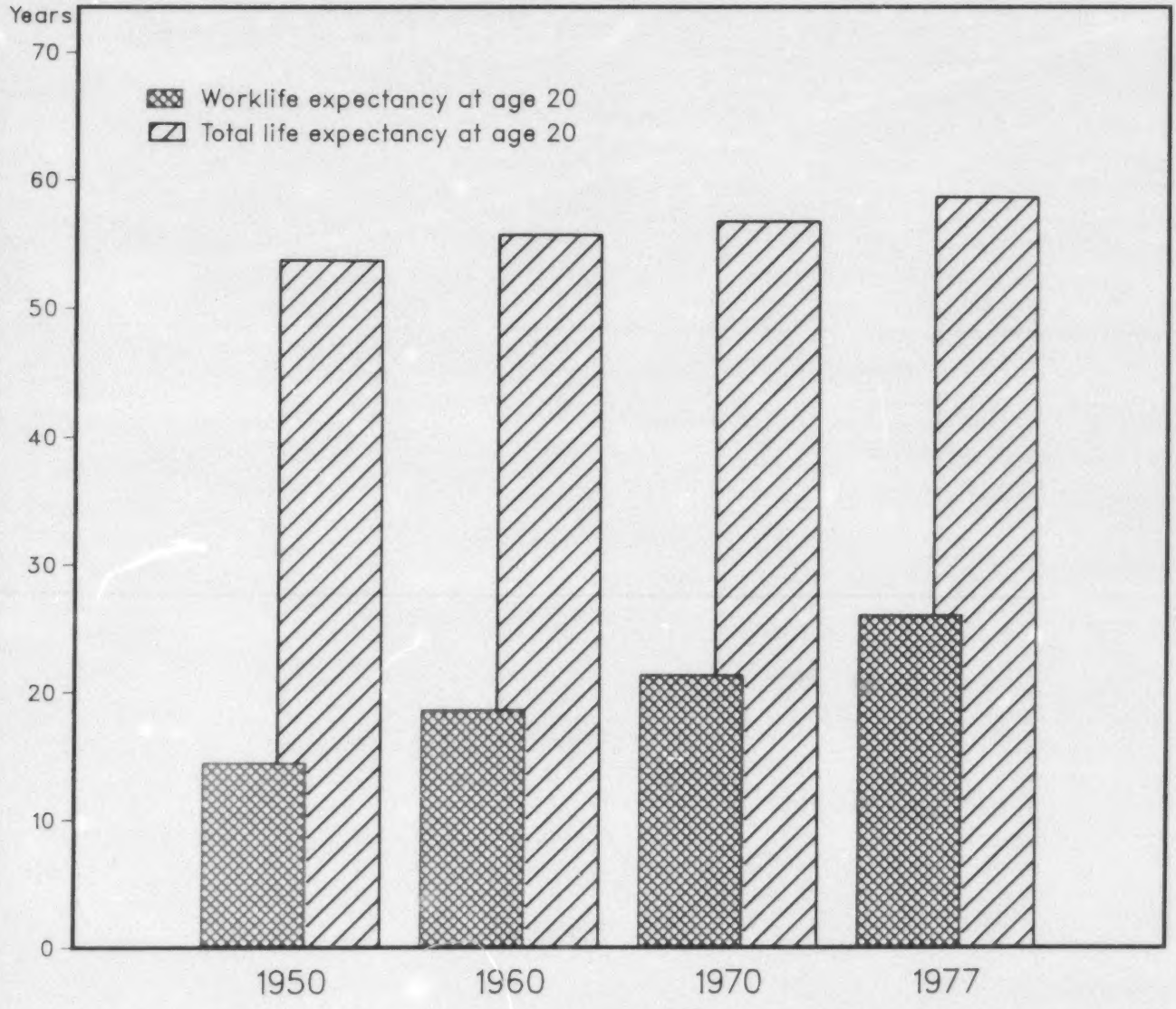

Chart 7. Life expectancy and worklife expectancy of women, selected years, 1950-77

- Women have constituted the major share of labor force growth since the 1960's, and are projected to account for 7 out of 10 additions to the labor force in the 1980's.

- In the past, the entrance of young people accounted for much of the increase in the labor force. Because of the slowdown in births beginning about 1960, there will be fewer young persons reaching labor force age in the 1980's, and overall labor force growth is likely to slacken.

- Adult women returning to the labor force have provided a large share of labor force growth and are expected to constitute an even larger share in the future.

Women's share of labor force growth is expected to increase in the 1980's

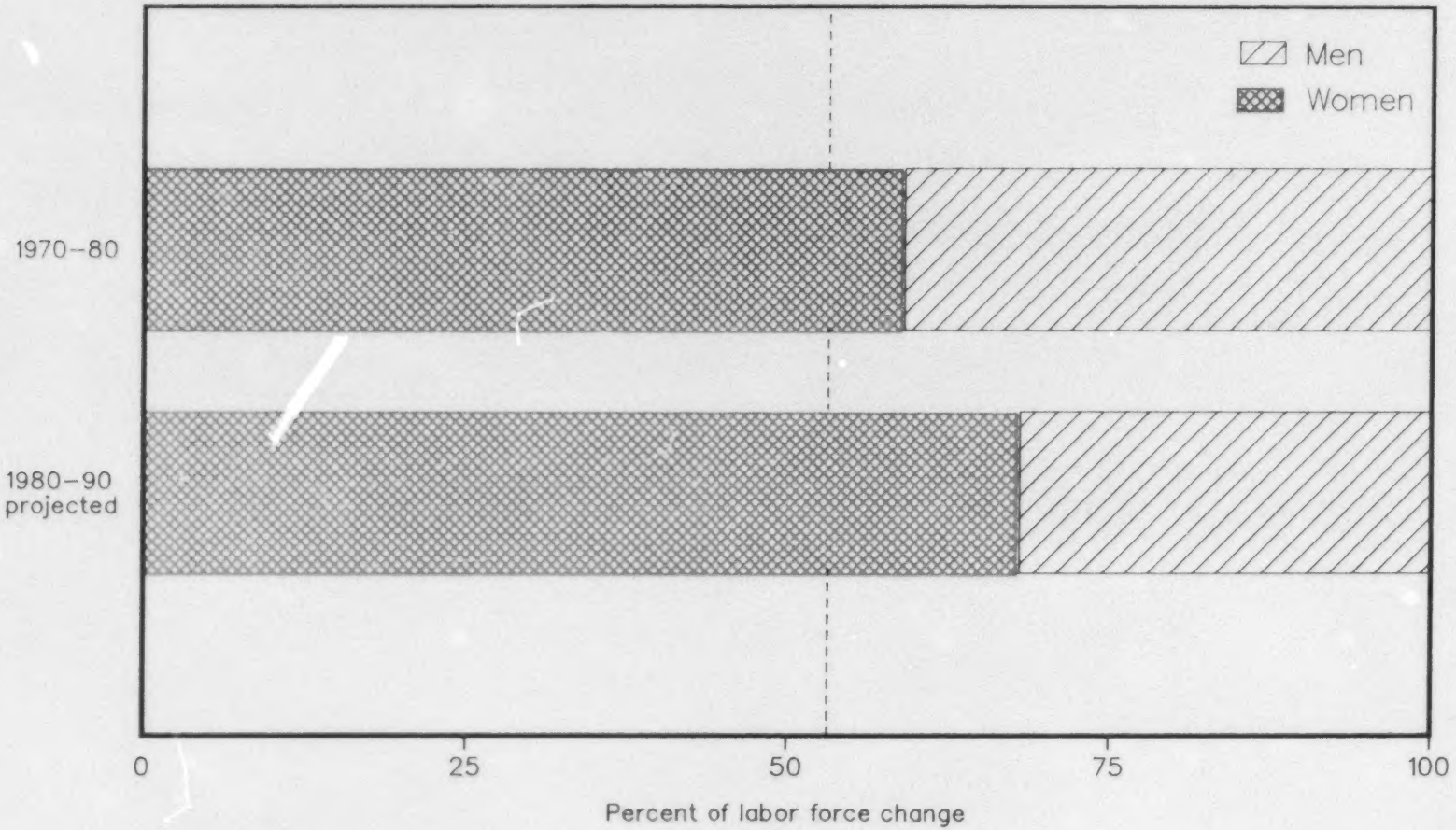

Chart 8. Labor force growth by sex, 1970's and projected 1980's

- The unemployment rate for women typically has been higher than the rate for men. The gap has narrowed during recessions, as joblessness rises most sharply in the cyclically sensitive goods-producing industries in which relatively few women work.

- During 1982, the unemployment rate for men actually exceeded the rate for women. The largest differential occurred in September, when the rate for adult men was 9.6 percent, 1.2 percentage points above the rate for adult women.

- For both men and women, unemployment has shown an upward trend; each recession has begun with a higher rate of unemployment than the previous one.

Until recently, women's unemployment rates have been higher than men's

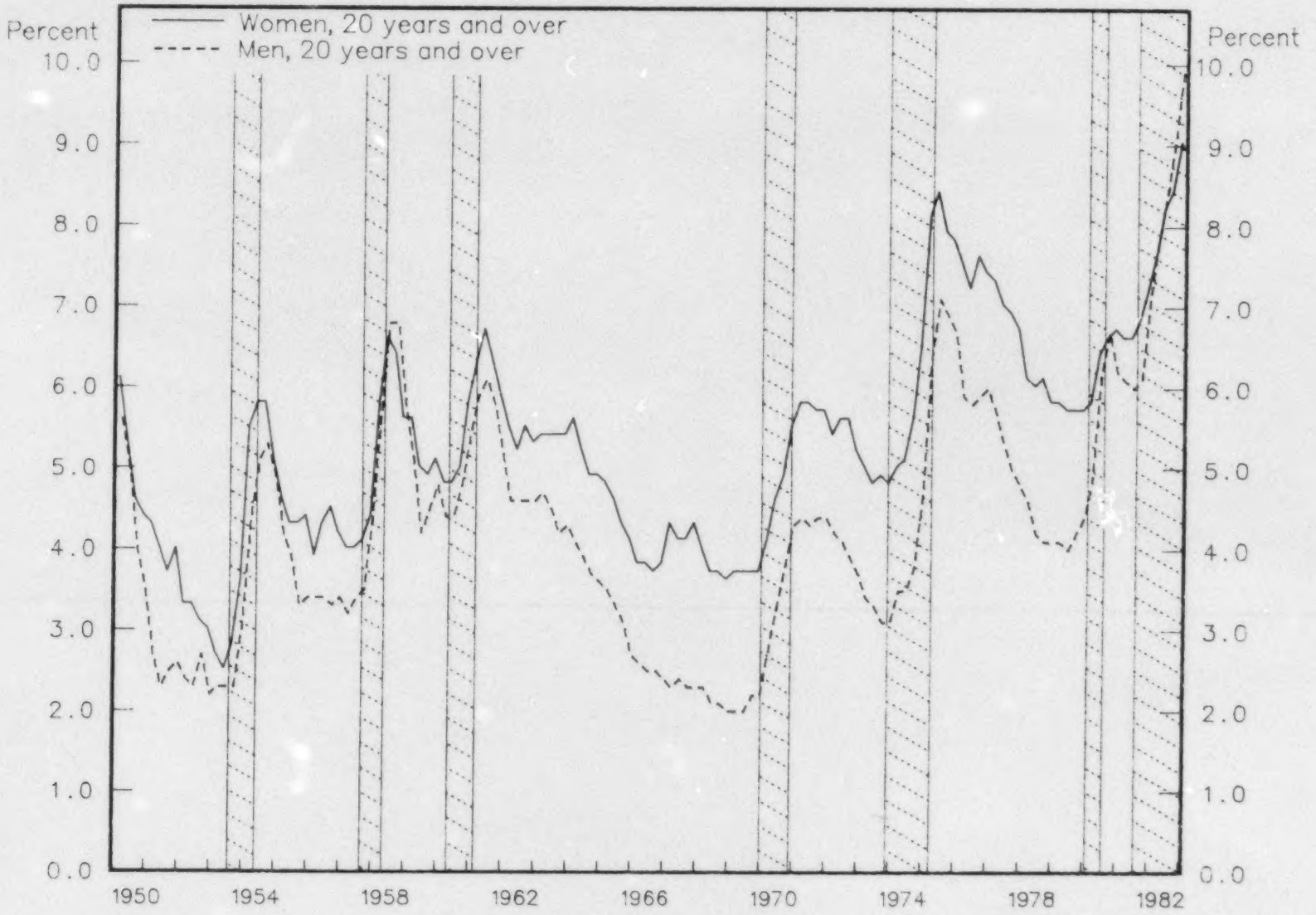

Chart 9. Unemployment rates of adults by sex, 1950-82

NOTE Shaded areas are recessions.

- As is the case among all workers, unemployment rates of women are higher for black and Hispanic workers than for whites. The rate for black women in 1982 was about twice the rate for white women.

- For women, as for men, unemployment rates decline with increasing education and work experience.

- Black teenagers have the highest unemployment rate of all worker groups. In 1982, the rate for black teenage women was 47 percent.

Unemployment among women varies by race, education, and age

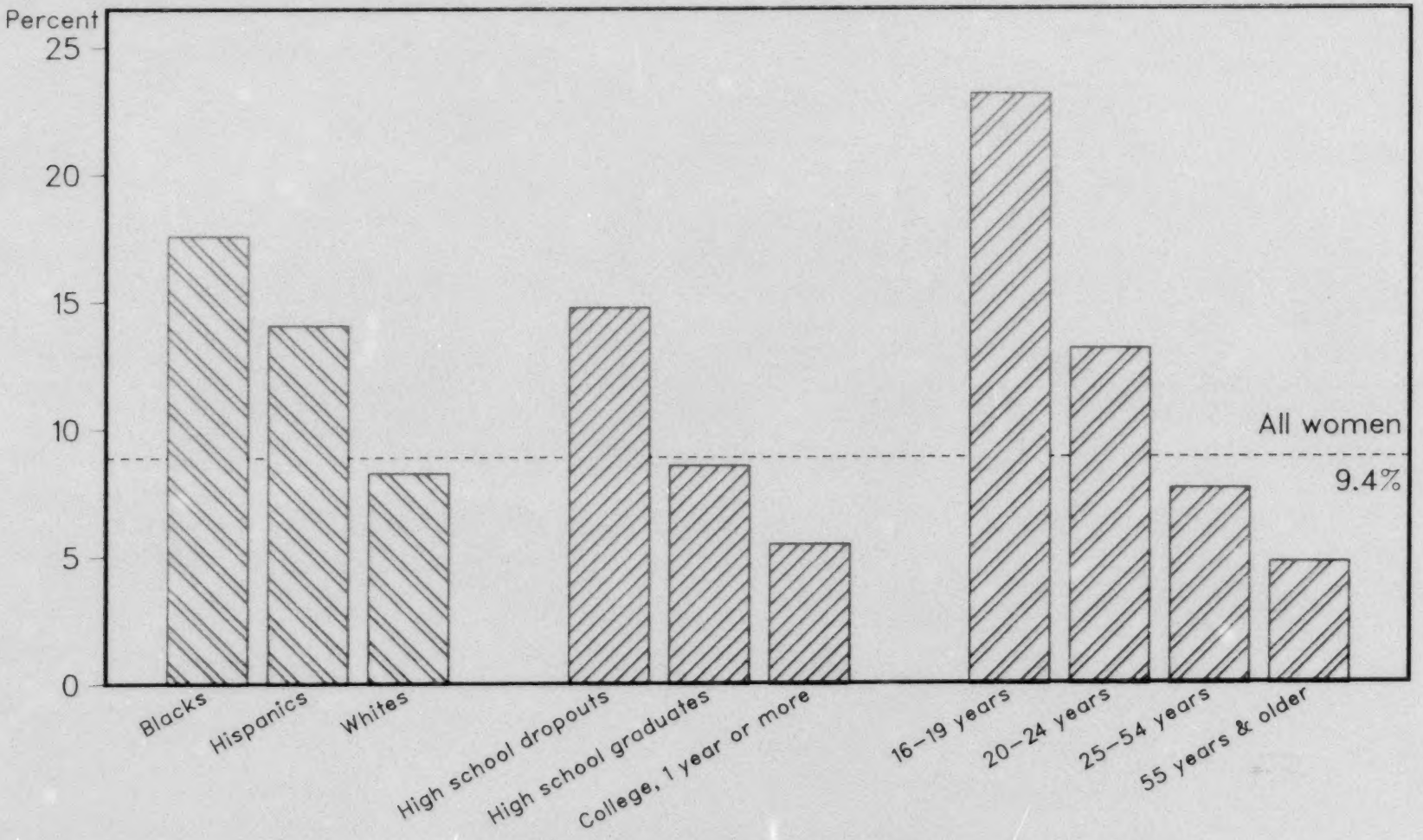

Chart 10. Unemployment rates of women by race and ethnicity, education, and age, 1982

- In 1982, 32 million children, or 55 percent of all children under 18 years of age, had a mother in the labor force.

- The mothers of more than 45 percent of all youngsters below age 6 and of nearly 60 percent of those 6 to 17 years were in the labor force.

- These proportions have grown rapidly in the last decade as it has become more acceptable for mothers to work.

The proportion of children with mothers in the labor force has grown to more than half

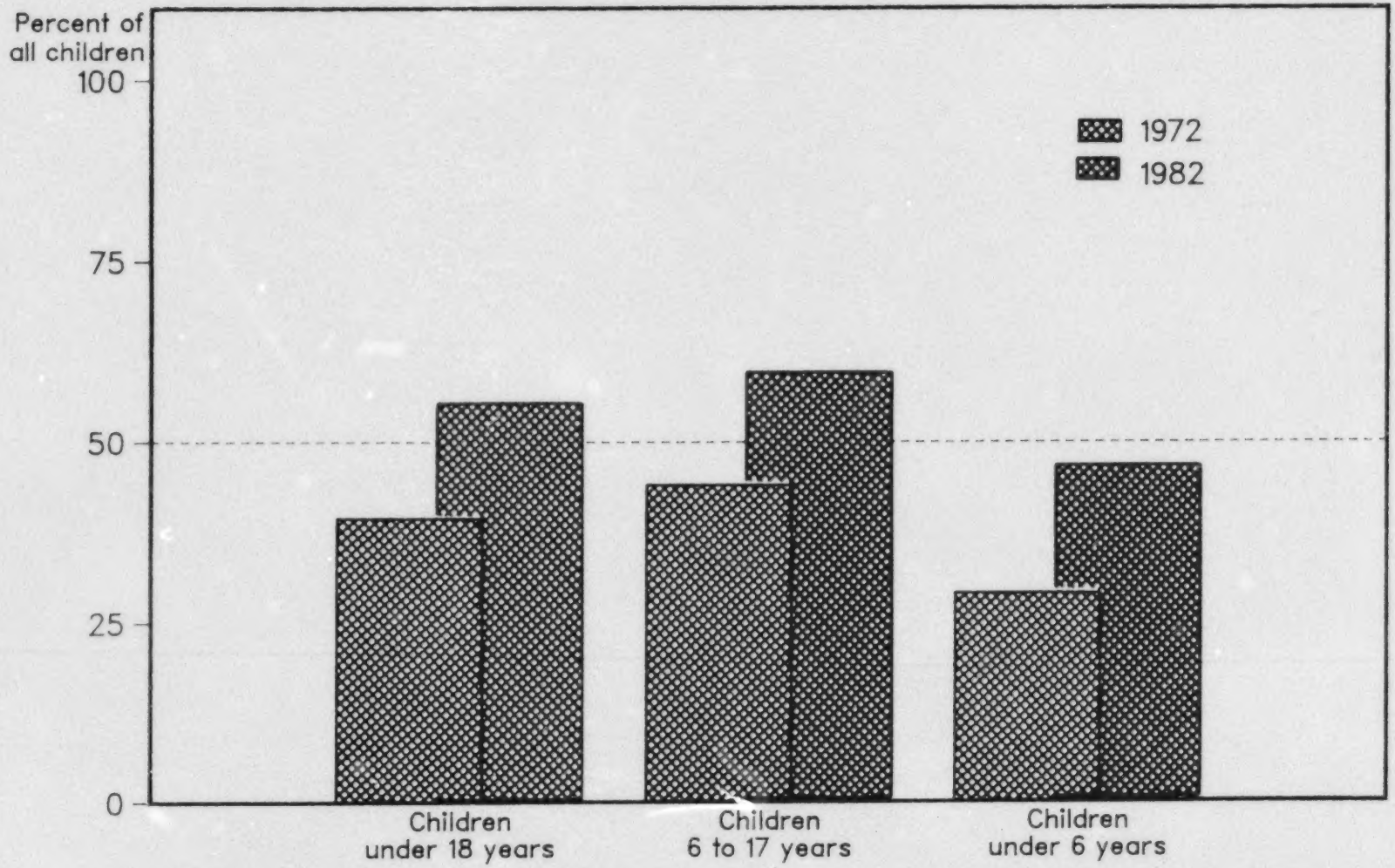

Chart 11. Children with mothers in the labor force as a proportion of all children by age of children, 1972 and 1982

- In March 1982, 26 million wives, or 51 percent of all married women, were working or looking for work. Twenty years earlier, only a third were in the labor force.

- Over half the growth in married women's labor force participation occurred during the 1970's, largely among those with school-age children. Between 1970 and 1980, the labor force participation rate of wives whose only children were 6 to 17 years old rose from 49 percent to 62 percent. However, since 1980, most of the increase has been among those with pre-school children.

- The proportions of divorced, separated, and never-married women in the labor force in 1982 also were greater than they had been 20 years earlier. Although the *increase* was smallest among divorced women, they remained far more likely to be in the labor force than women of any other marital status.

Half of all married women are now in the labor force

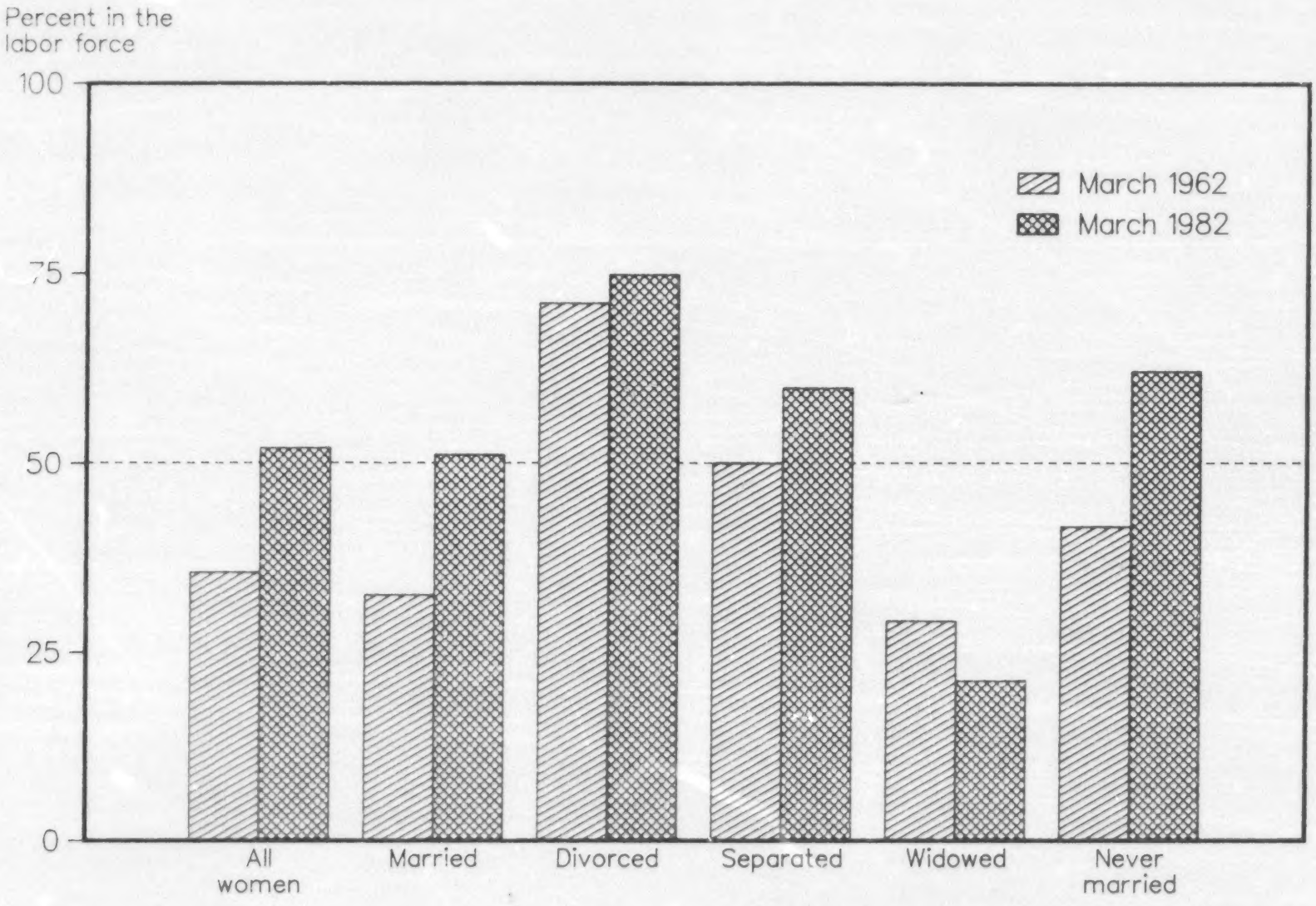

Chart 12. Labor force participation rates of women by marital status, 1962 and 1982

- One of every six families was maintained by a woman in March 1982. During the past decade, the number of families in which no husband was present climbed steadily, reflecting the increased frequency of marital breakups and children born outside of marriage.

- The growth in the number of families maintained by women far outpaced that of other families. From 1972 to 1982, their number increased by 57 percent to a total of 9.7 million, compared with a 10-percent increase for other families.

- Three out of five women maintaining families were in the labor force in 1982. These women had, on average, completed fewer years of school than wives and were concentrated in lower skilled, lower paying jobs.

The proportion of families maintained by a woman has increased markedly

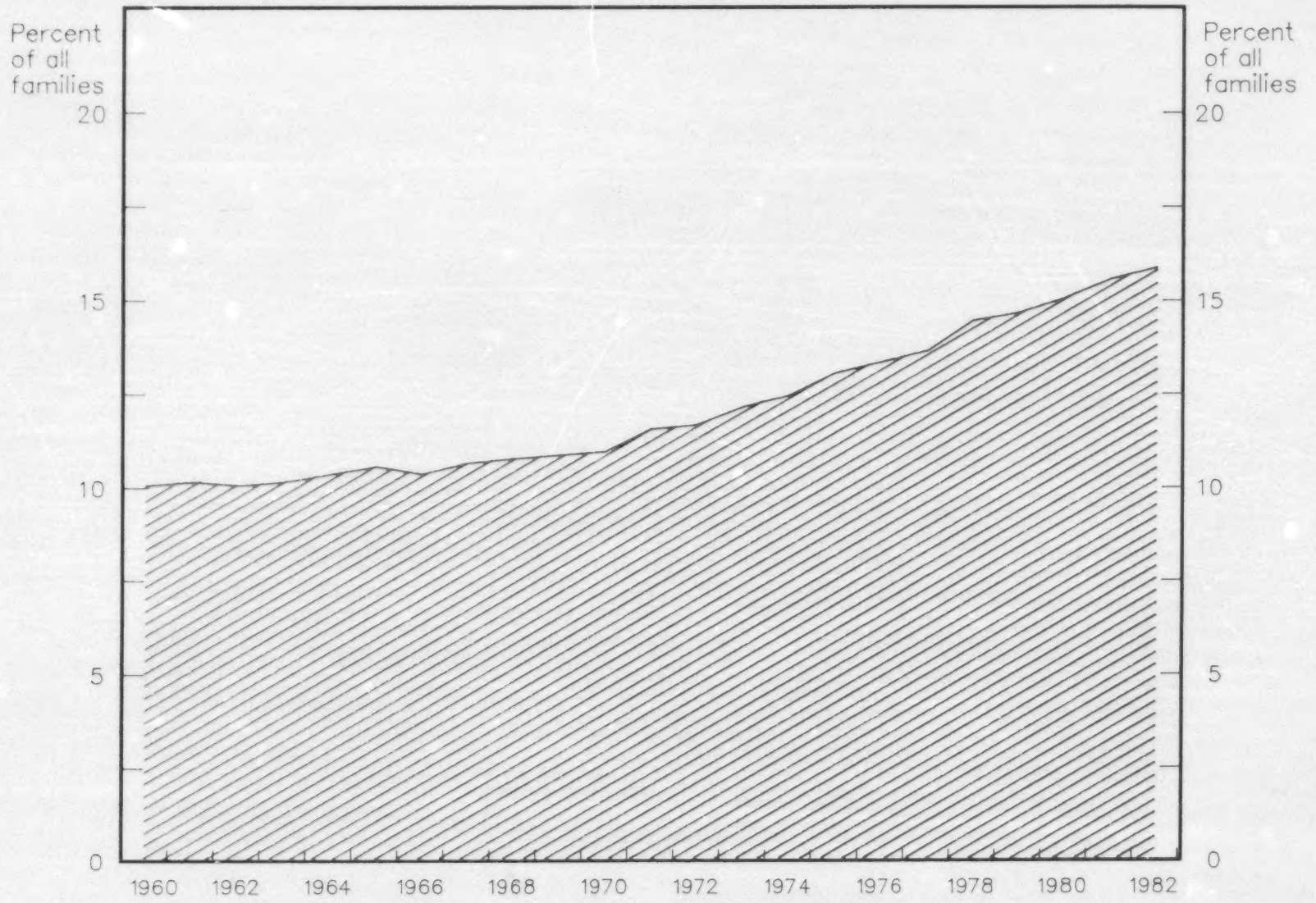

Chart 13. Families maintained by women as a proportion of all families, 1960-82

- Women maintaining families are far more likely to be unemployed than husbands or wives, their average (median) family income is less than half that of married couples, and they are five times as likely to be in poverty.

- Families maintained by a woman are much less likely than married-couple families to have more than one earner in the home.

- In 1981, about 3.4 million families maintained by women—1 of every 3—were in poverty, compared with 1 out of 16 married-couple families.

Women who maintain families are more likely to face serious economic difficulties

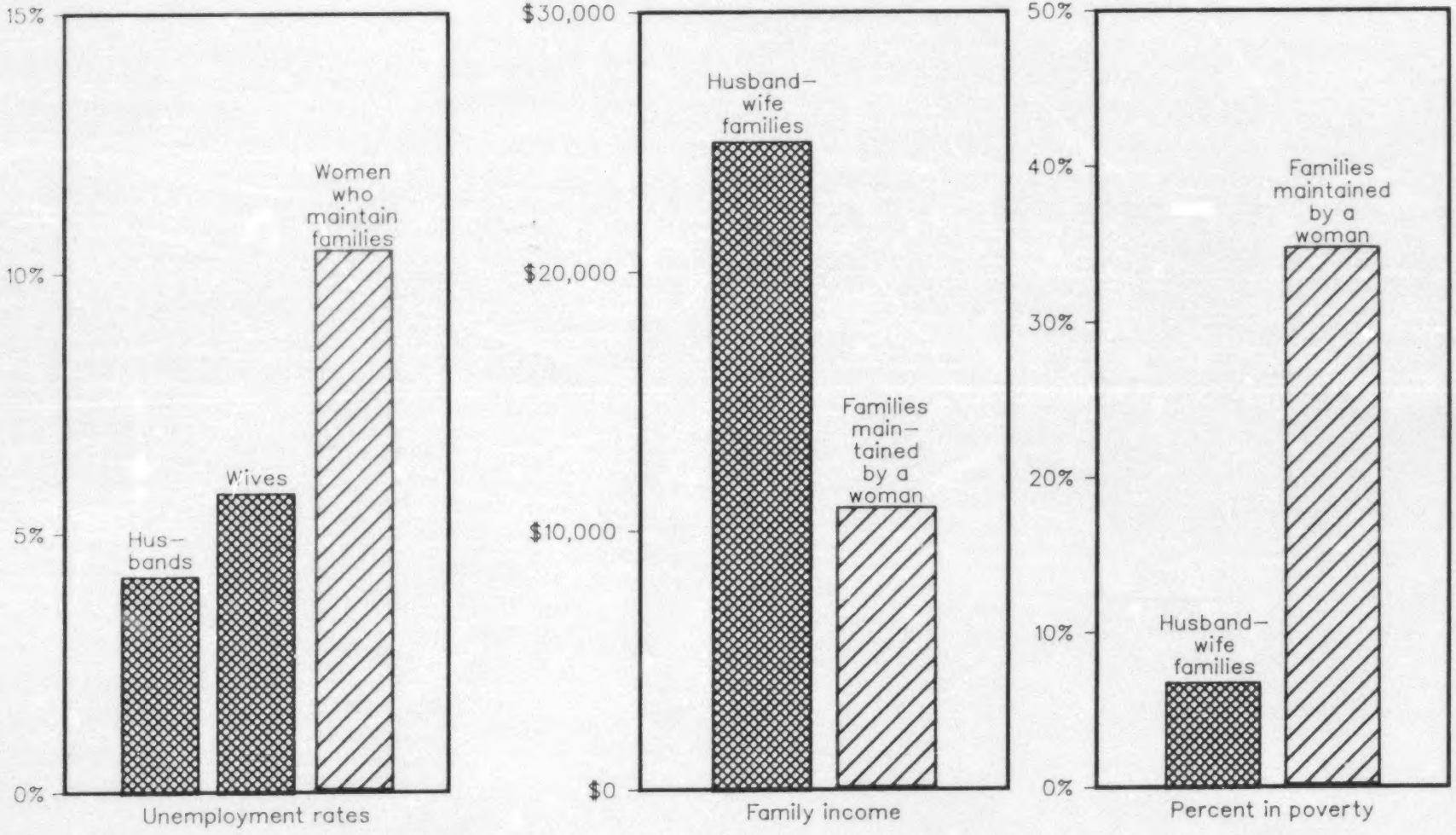

Chart 14. Unemployment, income, and poverty status of families by type of family, 1981

- Working women are in the same relative earnings position compared to men as they were in the past, averaging about $6 for every $10 earned by men.

- In some occupations, women's wages are closer to parity with men's wages. For example, in elementary school teaching, women earn roughly 85 percent as much as men. But in other areas, such as sales, women average only a little more than half of men's earnings.

- Occupations ranking high in terms of women's earnings typically do not rank among those with the highest concentrations of female workers. The very highly paid professional and managerial occupations are still predominantly male.

Women's earnings continue to average about 60 percent of men's

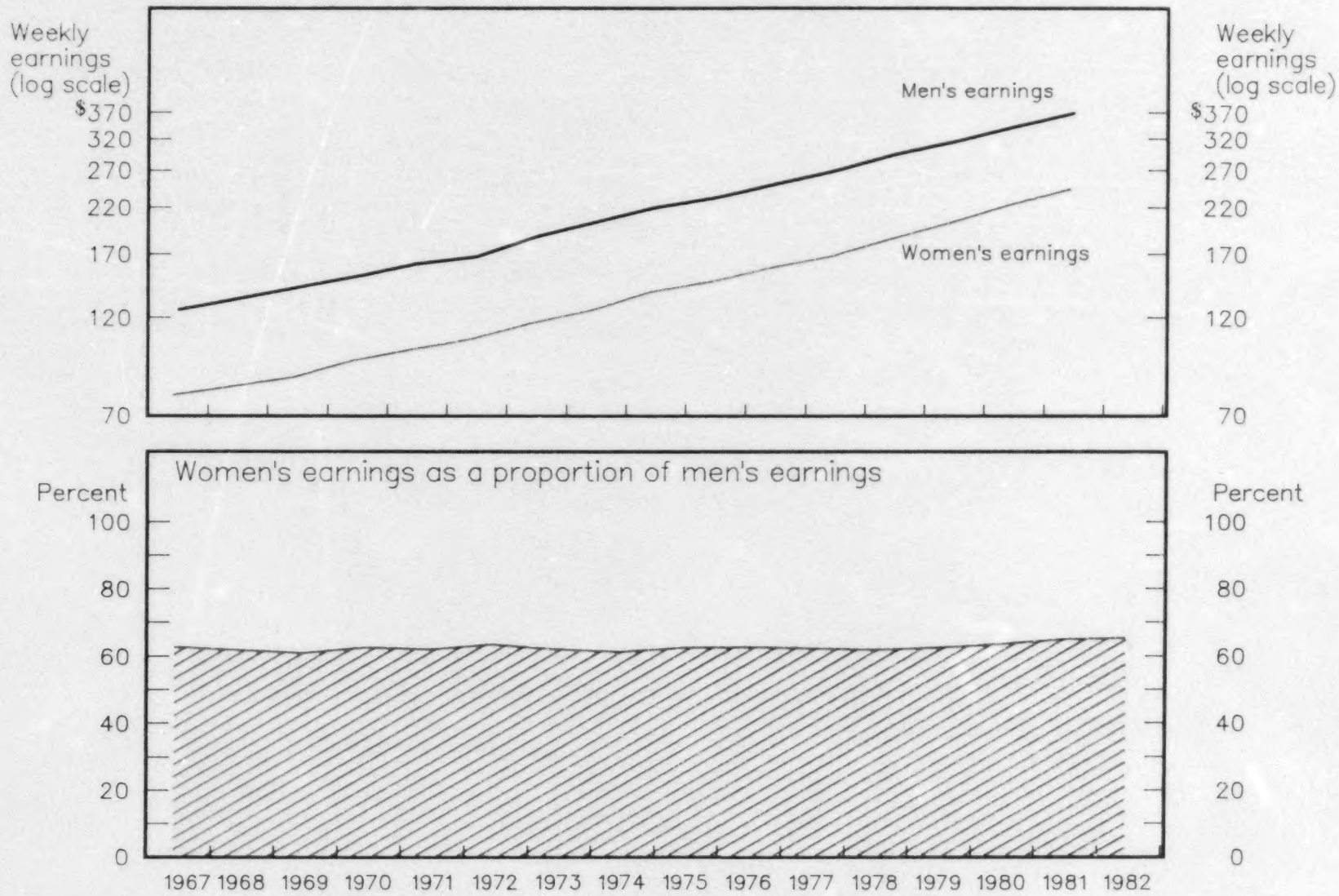

Chart 15. Usual weekly earnings by sex, 1967-82

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Phone: (212) 944-3121

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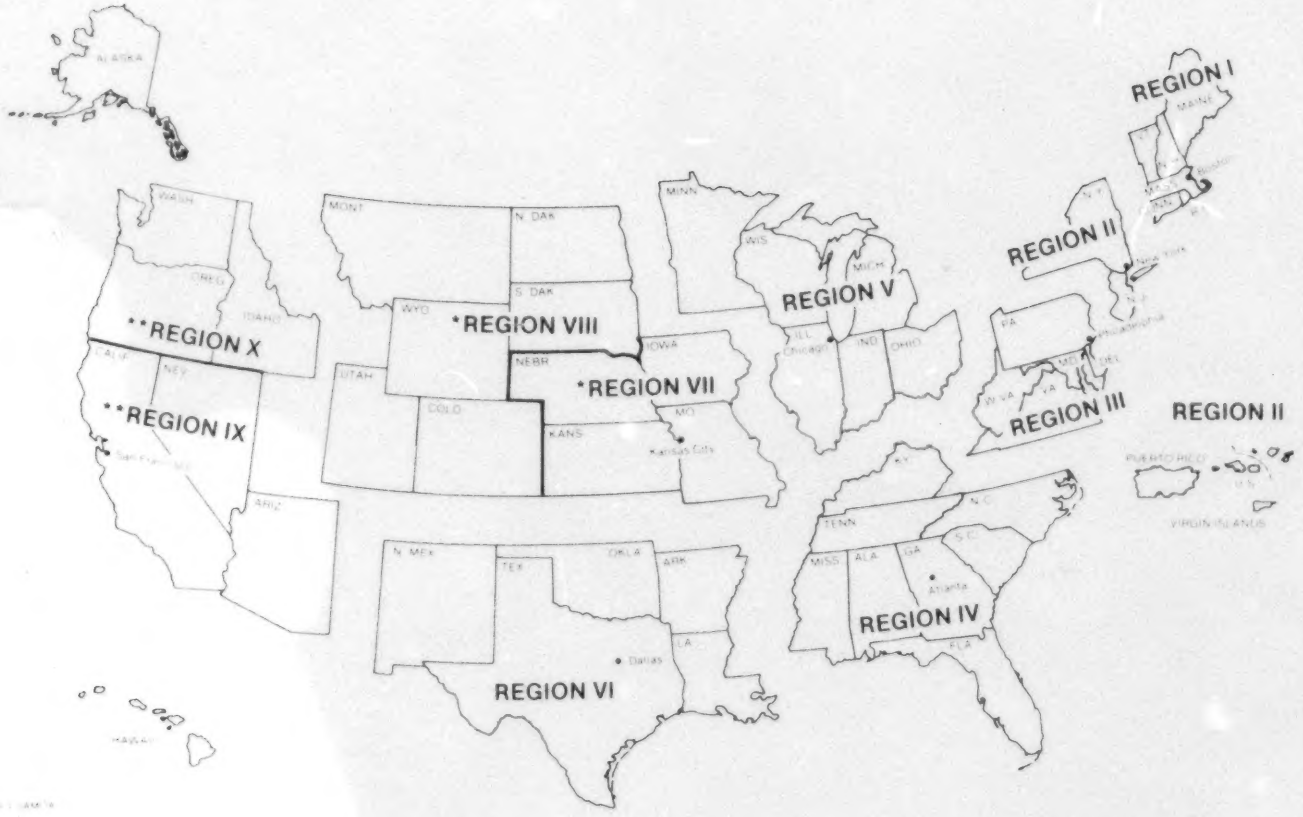

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